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with four additional Esquimaux and their families, making in all sixteen souls with four sledges and about sixty dogs, started for King William Land.

GEOGRAPHICAL NEWS.—The long sojourn of the Russian troops in Bulgaria and Roumelia has been fruitful of results to geographical knowledge. A series of astronomical and geodetic observations have fairly completed a network of triangulation and maps, based on the data thus obtained, which will soon appear.—The council of the Royal Geographical Society have determined to provide instruction in surveying and mapping, including the fixing of positions by astronomical observations, for those of their countrymen about to visit the less known portions of the globe.—Commander V. L. Cameron, the well known African explorer, the *Academy* states, has made an interesting journey through Syria and along the Tigris to Bagdad, in order to ascertain the practicability of a railroad from the Mediterranean to the Persian gulf. He found that there were no physical difficulties in the way, and that the local traffic alone would prove remunerative.—The committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund (English) will issue a subscriptional large paper edition of their survey of Western Palestine. The number of copies will be limited to 250. The work will comprise six or more quarto volumes and the great map in twenty-six sheets. The price will be twelve guineas. No cheaper edition is to be published. The American Survey map of Eastern Palestine is to appear in the same form a little later.—H. M. S. *Alert*, Sir George Nares commander, on her voyage to Magellan straits, in the autumn of 1878, took soundings over the Hotspur and Victoria banks. These singular isolated shoal banks, lying between the parallels of 18° and 21° S., and distant fifty to sixty leagues from the South American continent, average in their depths from twenty-five to thirty and thirty-five fathoms, and so far as explored are composed of dead coral worn down to a level surface and smoothed with a very thin incrustation of fine *Polyzoa*. The observations of Sir George Nares lead him to infer that these banks were once reefs of living coral with shallow water over them which have subsided to their present depth, but that the subsidence was too rapid for the reef-building coral animals to keep pace therewith, and the banks are now at too great a depth for the coral to exist.

MICROSCOPY.¹

THE POSTAL MICROSCOPICAL CLUB.—This club, whose work was suspended last winter on account of postal difficulties, has resumed its operations again. It was presumed by many that the effect of the new postal law which went into effect last spring would be to permit the mailing of slides as heretofore. It was found, however, that the single wooden boxes which had always been

¹ This department is edited by Dr. R. H. WARD, Troy, N. Y.

used were not at present satisfactory to the Post-office Department. For the purpose of absolute safety a double security was required, and the wooden box must be itself enclosed in a metal case. A feasible method of accomplishing this has now been introduced by the club by wrapping around the box a sheet of thin brass, left open at the ends and held in place by the twine with which the box is tied up. This method is approved by the department, and is only a trifling addition to the weight or expensiveness of the box; and the brass cover can be used without renewal for an indefinite length of time. The following officers have been elected: President, Rev. Samuel Lockwood, of Freehold, N. J.; secretary, Rev. A. B. Hervey, of Taunton, Mass.; assistant secretary and treasurer, Joseph McKay, 24 Liberty street, Troy, N. Y.; managers, R. H. Ward, M.D., Troy, N. Y., and C. M. Vorce, Cleveland, O.

A NEW LOCAL CLUB.—Early in August the "Griffith Club of Microscopy" was organized at Detroit, Prof. Samuel A. Jones being chairman of the meeting. The new club was well represented at the Buffalo meeting of the American Society of Microscopists. It is proposed to hold weekly meetings for study and work, beginning October 1st, at a private office.

WEST CHESTER PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.—This society is taking a place among the most active and successful microscopical societies. At the September meeting an excellent note on the fertilization of plants, with special relation to the question of insect fertilization, was read by Dr. J. R. McClurg, chairman of the Microscopical Section. In opposition to the theory of Darwin, Lubbock and others, that the sweets (and colors?) of flowers exist expressly for insects, in order to attract their visits and thus secure cross-fertilization, he states with much prominence, if not formal approval, the theory of Rev. Geo. Henslow, that the sweets existed before insects used them, though they have been subsequently increased by such use; that self-fertilization and not cross-fertilization is natural to the plants, and that self-sterility has resulted from habitual insect fertilization, and is therefore a dire necessity and not an original and beneficial trait. Mr. Wm. T. Haines also delivered an able address on cryptogamic botany, in which the beauties of the Pezizas and the ethics of scientific intercourse were dwelt upon with equal vigor and effect.

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SCIENTIFIC NEWS.

— Some interesting suggestions as to the evolution of the Vertebrata appear in Prof. Parker's Hunterian Lectures, recently reported in *Nature*. He recognizes "how thoroughly intermediate between the true reptiles and birds, the extinct birds of the chalk and the oölite were." As regards the mammals he says: